

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJ: SIGNIFICANCE OF APRIL 13 ELECTIONS

REF: TOKYO 3685

SUMMARY: APRIL 13 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN 17 PREFECTURES WILL BE FIRST MAJOR TEST OF MIKI'S POPULAR SUPPORT AND WILL AFFECT TIMING OF GENERAL ELECTIONS. IF LDP WINS IN BOTH TOKYO AND OSAKA OR TOKYO ALONE, MIKI MAY WELL CALL FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS BETWEEN MAY AND JULY. END SUMMARY.

1. DIET IS NOW IN VIRTUAL RECESS UNTIL MID-APRIL, WITH MOST DIET MEMBERS ON THE HUSTINGS FOR APRIL 13 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN 17 PREFECTURES AND ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN 44 OUT OF 47 PREFECTURES. WHILE LATTER ELECTIONS ARE IMPORTANT FROM STANDPOINT OF INDIVIDUAL LOWER HOUSE MEMBERS, SINCE PREFECTURAL ASSEMBLYMEN AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS FORM CRUX OF THEIR CAMPAIGN SUPPORT FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS, SUCH ELECTIONS DO NOT OTHERWISE HAVE NATIONAL IMPACT. ON OTHER HAND, GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS ARE SIGNIFICANT NATIONALLY IN THAT THEY WILL SERVE AS FIRST MAJOR TEST OF PRIME MINISTER MIKI'S POPULAR SUPPORT AND WILL IMPACT ON TIMING OF GENERAL ELECTIONS.

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2. LDP SOURCES QUERIED BY EMBOFF GAVE FOLLOWING RUNDOWN OF THE PARTY'S CHANCES OF SUCCESS AS OF NOW IN THE GUBERNATORIALS:

SLIM: KANAGAWA AND TOKYO
UPHILL FIGHT: OSAKA
FIFTY-FIFTY: CHIBA AND SAGA
SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN FIFTY-FIFTY: HOKKAIDO
GOOD TO EXCELLENT: 11 REMAINING PREFECTURES

3. CONSERVATIVES NOW OCCUPY 15 OUT OF 17 GUBERNATORIAL SEATS (EXCEPTIONS ARE TOKYO AND OSAKA). LDP SECRETARY GENERAL NAKASONE SAID PUBLICLY THAT PARTY WOULD BE ABLE CLAIM VICTORY IF IT WINS 12 OUT OF 17 SEATS, WHILE LDP FACTIONS OTHER THAN THOSEXBF MIKI AND NAKASONE DISPUTE THIS. THOSE IN FUKUKUO FACTION, FOR EXAMPLE, TOLD EMBOFF THAT ONLY 12 WINS (NOT INCLUDING TOKYO AND OSAKA) WOULD PROVIDE GROUNDS FOR ATTACKING MIKI AND COULD, TOGETHER WITH OTHER DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS POOR LEGISLATIVE RECORD, LEAD TO MOVES TO TOPPLE HIM.

4. HOWEVER, ALL OF OUR LDP SOURCES AGREE THAT KEY ELEMENT WILL BE LDP SHOWING IN TOKYO AND OSAKA. THEY CLAIM THAT IF THE LDP WON IN BOTH PLACES OR TOKYO ALONE (AND DO REASONABLY WELL ELSEWHERE), THE PARTY WOULD BE OVERWHELMED BY A "BANZAI MOOD." MIKI COULD THEN CARRY OUT HIS STRONG PERSONAL DESIRE TO CALL FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS SOMETIME BETWEEN MAY AND JULY. IF LDP WERE TO WIN IN OSAKA AND NOT IN TOKYO (AND DO FAIRLY WELL ELSEWHERE), THIS WOULD STILL BE CONSIDERED A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY AND A "PLUS" FOR MIKI, BUT PERHAPS WOULD NOT PROVIDE ENOUGH STEAM FOR EARLY ELECTIONS. IF PARTY LOSES BOTH TOKYO AND OSAKA AS WELL AS THREE OR MORE ADDITIONAL PREFECTURES, MIKI WOULD HAVE TO DELAY ELECTIONS UNTIL FALL OR LATER, AND COULD FACE TROUBLE WITHIN THE PARTY.
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